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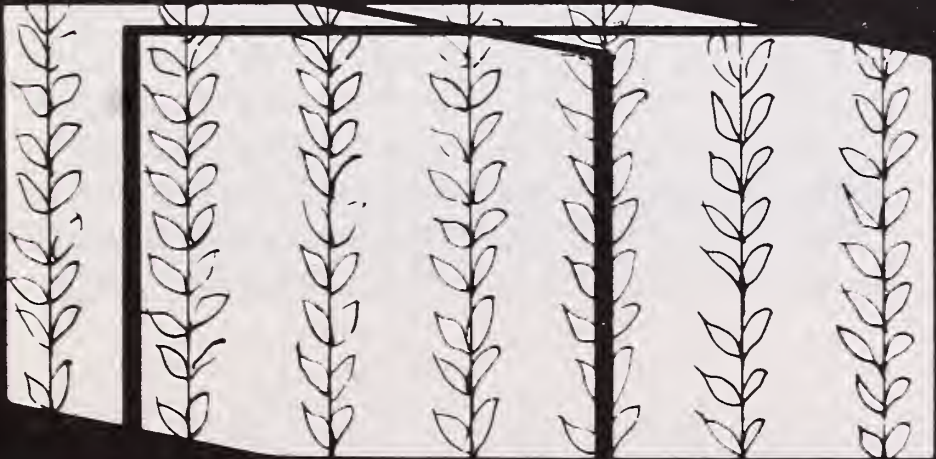


# 1162

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# SHIPPING FOREIGN PLANTS HOME

Program Aid 1162  
Plant Protection and Quarantine Programs  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture



# Shipping Foreign Plants Home

Whenever you import, ship, or bring home plants or plant materials from abroad, you risk bringing foreign insects, diseases, or weed seeds into this country. Some of the most destructive plant pests in the United States today are "foreigners" that hitchhiked in undetected on imported plant materials.

By complying with Federal quarantine regulations—including obtaining a plant import permit when required—you help protect not only your own plant collection, but also the Nation's crops, forests, lawns, gardens, and environment.

## Our Plant Quarantine System

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) maintains 13 plant inspection stations at designated ports of entry. Almost all foreign plant materials coming into the United States by ship, plane, or mail must pass through one of these stations. The materials are carefully examined for insects and diseases. Infested plants are either treated or, if no suitable treatment is available, refused entry into the country.

APHIS also works closely with the U.S. Customs Service, checking plants and plant materials brought back by overseas travelers. Prohibited items are confiscated and destroyed without reimbursement.

These safeguards work well; each year, thousands of destructive plant pests are intercepted. For maximum protection, however, APHIS needs the full cooperation of collectors, plant hobbyists, commercial growers, researchers—anyone who imports, ships, or brings plant materials into the country.

Too often, travelers return from abroad carrying, either knowingly or unknowingly, prohibited materials. In some cases—justifying their action with the idea that "my one plant can't hurt"—they attempt to smuggle plants through Customs inspection. But just one plant can be the means of introducing a highly destructive insect or disease into the United States.

Plant materials brought back from overseas must be declared on the Customs declaration form.



Failing to declare items subjects you to a fine. Smuggling plants or plant materials into the United States is a Federal crime, punishable by a fine, and/or imprisonment.

## **Obtaining Information and Permits**

When possible, determine in advance the entry status of the plants or plant materials you intend to import, mail, or bring into the United States. Some items are admitted without restriction other than inspection, others are banned, and still others may be admitted with USDA approval in the form of a permit.

Plants intended for growing or propagation, for example, require a permit. They may also be subject to postentry quarantine (supervised growing and inspection). This is required for plants from countries known to have dangerous plant diseases that can be detected only in the growing plant.

By checking with the USDA beforehand, you may save yourself delay or possible confiscation of your plant material at port of entry.

To check the entry status of plant material and/or obtain a permit, write—

**Permit Unit**

Plant Protection and Quarantine Programs  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Federal Building  
Hyattsville, Md. 20782

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## **Partial Entry Status List**

Here is a list of common plant materials and their entry status:

*Flower bulbs*—In general, admitted. Must be free of soil. *Anemone* bulbs from Germany and *Gladiolus* bulbs from Africa prohibited.

*Flowers*—Fresh cut or dried admitted. Fresh camellia and gardenia prohibited into Florida and treatment required in California.

*Plants*—All plants in soil prohibited. Most kinds of

dried plants, flowers, and leaves for herbarium or decorative purposes admitted. Live plants, shrubs, trees, and fresh cuttings either prohibited or require a permit. Postentry quarantine action may also be required.

*Seeds*—of flowers, shrubs, trees, and other plants in general, admitted. Tree and shrub seeds require a permit.

*Packing materials*—Peat moss, sphagnum moss, wood shavings, sawdust, paper, and excelsior admitted. Grass, straw, and similar unprocessed plant materials, prohibited.

There are exceptions to the above list. For example, requirements may differ for materials brought in from Canada, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Mexico, and procedures may differ for large commercial shipments. Such exceptions emphasize the importance of prior checking with the USDA.

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## **Buying, Handling, and Shipping Tips**

These general suggestions on buying, handling, and shipping plants will help yours survive the trip home, clear through APHIS inspection, and thrive in your collection. More specific instructions may be obtained from plant societies. *Remember, you should have a USDA permit, if required, before you import, ship, or bring plant materials into the country.*

### **BUYING**

Choose carefully the types of plants that you buy. Plants may be specific to a particular eco-system. If you cannot duplicate the conditions in your greenhouse, the plants may die. For example, plants from a high altitude may not survive at sea level.

Buy only from reputable dealers. APHIS inspectors find plants from some sources consistently pest free; from other sources, always "buggy." Plants collected from the wild and those grown in the open are most likely to require treatment.

## **CLEANING AND INSPECTING**

Remove all soil, other growing media, or forest litter from plants before you ship or bring them home. Plants arriving in or contaminated with sand, soil, or earth will be refused entry. However, epiphytic plants (such as some orchids) established on tree-fern slabs or similar soil-free media may be admitted.

Inspect your plants carefully and discard those obviously diseased or insect infested. Do not attempt to remove insects or disease symptoms in order to slip the plants through APHIS inspection. The end result could be introduction of the insect or disease into your collection.

Do not treat the plants yourself. Chemical residues could constitute a health hazard to APHIS inspectors and may camouflage pest problems. Or, your treatment may be ineffective and subject your plants to unnecessary stress, seriously weakening or killing them. Plant inspection station treatments are given only when necessary and are specific for the pest to be controlled.

## **PACKAGING FOR SHIPMENT**

Improper packaging is the most common cause of plant death or deterioration during shipment. APHIS inspectors frequently find plants jammed or compressed into small containers, turning to mush in plastic bags, or damaged by use of nonprotective containers.

Plants are best shipped in the dormant state. In this state, they can best withstand temperature extremes, dehydration, and other rigors of transit, and the effects of disinfestation treatments.

Use a sturdy container for shipment. Wooden crates or native baskets are recommended. Cardboard boxes can be used but are subject to crushing.

Pack the plants loosely, using crumpled newspaper or excelsior to protect them from bruising and to allow for free air movement.

Never enclose the plants in plastic bags or in containers wrapped in or coated with a moisture barrier such as plastic or foil. Too much or too little moisture promotes the growth of rot organisms or other deteriorating conditions.

## **MAILING**

To avoid the delay and additional expense sometimes encountered in bringing plants or plant materials home, you may mail them directly to an APHIS plant inspection station.

Air parcel post is probably the best way to send small, noncommercial shipments of plants. When mailing—

(1) Send the package early in the week to avoid any weekend postal delay. Transit time is an important factor in plant survival.

(2) Use APHIS' green-and-yellow mailing labels. They save time by directing parcels to the plant inspection station. Request mailing labels at the time you apply for a permit.

(3) Enclose a sheet of paper with your name, home address, and permit number inside the package. After clearance, the package will be forwarded to you without additional cost. Any duties assessed will be collected at your local post office.

(4) Mark the outside of the package to show its contents.

(5) Send the package to: *U.S. Department of Agriculture, APHIS, PPQ*, at one of the following addresses:

Border Inspection Station, Rm. 202  
Nogales, Arizona 85621

Agriculture Building, Rm. 101  
Embarcadero at Mission Street  
San Francisco, California 94105

P.O. Box 3343, Terminal Island  
San Pedro, California 90731



Miami Inspection Station  
P.O. Box 592136  
Miami, Florida 33159

P.O. Box 9067  
Honolulu, Hawaii 96820

P.O. Box 20037, Airport Mailing Facility  
New Orleans, Louisiana 70140

Plant Importations Office  
209 River Street  
Hoboken, New Jersey 07030

John F. Kennedy International Airport  
Plant Inspection Station, Cargo Building 80  
Jamaica, New York 11430

P.O. Box 3386  
Old San Juan, Puerto Rico 00904

P.O. Box 306  
Brownsville, Texas 78520

Cordova Bridge Station, Room 172-A  
3600 East Paisano  
El Paso, Texas 79905

P.O. Box 277  
Laredo, Texas 78040

Federal Office Building, Room 9014  
Seattle, Washington 98104

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## **Inspection Station Treatments**

APHIS inspectors do not treat your plants indiscriminately. Fumigation or other treatment is applied only when pests are found or when thorough inspection is impractical. Every precaution is taken to minimize damage. Strict guidelines are followed and specific treatments are prescribed for different plant groups and pest types.

Every effort is made to expedite the inspection and treatment of plants. Most shipments are released the same day they are received.

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## **Additional Publications**

PA 1083, *"Travelers' Tips—On Bringing Food, Plant, and Animal Products into the United States"*.—Send a post card request to: "Travelers' Tips," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

*"Custom Hints for Returning U.S. Residents—Know Before You Go"*.—Available from the U.S. Customs Service or any agricultural quarantine office listed in telephone directories under "U.S. Department of Agriculture."

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